

Berry, Charles Scott

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Dr. Charles Scott Berry

THE WIDENING HORIZON

The odd darkey prayed to be of service to the Lord, if only in an advisory capacity. The only hope I have of being of service to you this afternoon is in an advisory capacity. I strongly suspect, however, that your appreciation of my service will be inversely proportional to the amount of advice offered and the time taken to offer it.

The average expectation of life for those of you who are receiving your diplomas today is more than forty years. The possibilities of these forty years that lie before you may in some small measure be foreshadowed by the achievements of the past forty years.

On the atlas of the world forty years ago large circles marked off great white areas about the poles labeled "unknown." These large circles have narrowed to a point and today the entire surface of the earth has been explored by man. Not content with his conquest of the surface of the earth, man is now attempting to conquer the stratosphere and is casting wistful glances toward the moon. Possibly the child of tomorrow may not cry in vain for the moon. In fact it is reported by the press that the grandson of Mark Hanna has created a trust fund for the burial of his body on the moon if and when possible. Doubtless he wants to rest there in order that he may have what is so difficult to get, an over-all view of what is happening on this most interesting planet.

During this same period of time the horizon of man's knowledge of the physical universe has widened to include worlds in outer space, millions of light years distant. The cosmic¹ ray has been discovered which comes from out beyond the Milky Way and enters our atmosphere with a penetrating power 6 to 100 times greater than any other known ray.

During these forty years the horizon of man's knowledge has been extended in the realm of small things as well. Witness the breaking up of the atom and the consequent changes in man's conception of the nature of matter.

The antiquity of man has been pushed back into the past from 50,000 to 500,000 years.

The view that the universe is a closed system in which everything that is and shall be was determined from the beginning is yielding to the conception that the universe is in the making and that its destiny remains undetermined.

Today the Golden Age lies in the future, not in the past, except in the case of the die-hard conservatives who long for the flesh pots of 1929. They should join Mark Hanna's grandson on the moon in order that they might see more clearly the direction in which this world is moving.

¹Milligan, R. A. Science, March 1, 1935.

The widening of man's horizon during the past forty years through the increase and application of knowledge has resulted in the transformation of communication, transportation, production, recreation, and education. What has actually happened during these two-score years is more wonderful than anything pictured in Plato's Republic, Campanelli's City of the Sun, Moore's Utopia, Bacon's New Atlantic, or Bellamy's Looking Backward. These phenomenal changes are due not to the superior intelligence of this generation, for we have no good reason to think that the intelligence of our race has increased perceptibly during the past 10,000 years. But rather these remarkable achievements are due to the fact that we have builded our superstructure on the foundations laid through the toil, suffering, and sacrifice of countless generations that have gone before.

One can quite understand the ancestor worship of the Chinese when one realizes that a mode of life today is possible for the masses of the people that was denied even the rulers of our remote ancestors. All this is made possible by the fact that each generation has passed on to the next more than it had received. With mechanical power equal to the work of 50 slaves² for every man, woman and child in the United States, we stand upon the threshold of

²Compton, Karl T. Science, Nov. 2, 1934, p. 390.

an era in which it will be possible to provide our every citizen with an abundance of food, suitable clothing, a decent habitation, protection against contagious and infectious disease, and time and opportunity for the development of those human attributes that make men great. For the first time within the history of the race that security for which man has ever struggled seems to be almost within reach. But like Moses we may never enter this promised land, for civilized man has not complied with one vitally important condition, namely, that the common heritage, the accumulated knowledge of the ages, be used for the welfare of all. Can anyone in the wildest flights of his imagination claim for a single moment that civilized man has met this fundamental condition?

Individual liberty as we understand the term has ceased to exist in Italy, and that powerful nation under the leadership of a dictator is preparing to rob a helpless nation not only of its territory but of that which it prizes still more highly - its freedom. Germany under the domination of another dictator has destroyed religious freedom and is now engaged in the ruthless persecution of a helpless people. Having learned little or nothing from a devastating World War, Europe is on the brink of another conflagration.

Neither have we in our own country used our common heritage for the welfare of all. Every year a great army

of more than one-half million individuals enter our jails and prisons; 200,000 children are brought into our juvenile courts; 90,000 men and women broken in mind find their way into hospitals for mental disease; 10 million of our citizens tread our streets and highways seeking in vain for work; 15 millions in despair are forced to turn to the state for food to keep them alive until the hoped-for better days may come, while many of their fellow citizens live in a luxury denied kings of former years. Possibly man's vision of security is nothing but a mirage in the desert of life.

I am always thrilled when I hear the fire siren blow, see all traffic draw up to the curb, and watch the pedestrians stand with bated breath as the fire engine dashes by at full speed to the scene of the fire, regardless of whether it is a poor man's hut or a rich man's palace that is in flames. But it seems strange that we will interrupt the traffic of a great city in our haste to save from fire the property of our humblest citizen, and yet will compel that same citizen to beg for help in the name of charity to save his own life or that of his children from disease or starvation - and when that help is given, too frequently we give it grudgingly and after long delay.

Is it possible that as a nation we are more interested in saving property than in saving human lives, more interested in the acquisition of material wealth than in the development of those virtues which make a nation great?

No, it is not that! The history of our country shows that we have not been wholly unmindful of the rights of our fellows. As a people we adopted the Federal Constitution in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

That we as a people believe in these objectives as set forth in the preamble to the Constitution of the United States is evidenced by the fact that we fought a great war to abolish slavery; that is, to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. Who, today, would vote for the restoration of slavery? We freed Cuba and the Philippines from the tyranny of Spain and are making them independent nations. We entered the World War to make it possible for more people to become masters of their own destiny.

We respond promptly and generously when any section of our country suffers from fire, flood, or earthquake. Now, in the midst of the world's greatest depression, we are taking action that today not even our humblest citizen shall suffer for the necessities of life. Through the provisions of the Social Security Act we shall attempt to make it possible for 25 million of our countrymen to face the future unafraid, protected against old age, unemployment, and the major hazards of life. Possibly it may not be necessary much longer to keep in repair the road that leads over the hill to the poorhouse.

When the imagination of the American people is once touched by a great and worthy cause there is no lack of response. The spectacular and tragic loss of life and property from fire has resulted in the organization of remarkably effective fire departments. Epidemics of contagious and infectious diseases which took a dreadful toll of life and left their living victims crippled and scarred have led to the organization of state, city and county departments of health. Any great calamity or misfortune that affects large numbers of our fellows in a short period of time usually results in prompt action on the part of the group as a whole. It is at once recognized that to deal successfully with such misfortune is beyond the power of the single individual; group action is required.

If a thousand individuals are destroyed by a flood or an earth quake in a single night we are greatly shocked, but if those same thousand individuals die one by one from preventable disease or accident over a period of six months we are scarcely aware of their death. To the unusual or unexpected or to that which brings misfortune or disaster to large numbers of our fellows we respond promptly and efficiently. But to those evils which affect the few, or to the common misfortunes of everyday life with which we have long been familiar, we tend to respond slowly and inefficiently.

This apparent indifference to the misfortunes of others in daily life is due in large measure to the fact that we still cling to the doctrine of rugged individualism, i.e., every individual for himself and God help the hindmost. Unfortunately, at the present time the hindmost are so numerous that God does not have agents enough to care for them all.

Rugged individualism is but a relic of pioneer days when the lonely settler was wholly dependent on his own resources for food, shelter and protection against savages and wild beasts. He lived by himself and for himself in a world with a narrow horizon. The frontier has disappeared; the pioneer days are gone and rugged individualism in the sense of self-sufficiency has no place in modern life. The inventions and discoveries which are revolutionizing our mode of life are the products of group effort, of individuals working together toward a common objective.

Competition of one individual with another is rapidly shifting to competition of one group with another, and these competing groups are becoming larger and larger. The very nature of this group competition requires the greatest degree of cooperation on the part of the individual members of the competing groups. The majority of men today are no longer in business for themselves. They are working for others, and their success or failure depends on the success or failure of the organization for which they are

working. The emphasis is shifting from competition to cooperation.

Thus, as man's horizon widens he discovers that his own success or failure is in large measure determined by the success or failure of his fellows. A broader loyalty is the great need of the hour.

Narrow loyalty is characteristic of the rugged individualist. His prayer is, "O Lord, bless me and my wife, son John and his wife, us four and no more!" There are 4,000 representatives of this type of loyalty behind the gray walls of our penitentiary. Only many of them do not ask the divine blessing to rest on son John and his wife, and some of them do not even include their own wives. The investigating committees of the United States Senate discovered high in the realms of finance and industry many such rugged individualists who belong with their brothers behind the gray walls of the penitentiary, for they like the criminal have robbed others that they and their own kind might prosper.

But fortunately in all the walks of life are found some who have identified their own welfare with that of the entire group. At vocational one/extreme stands Will Rogers, the cowboy from the West, whose generosity and kindly humor lightened the shadows of life for millions of his countrymen. He said that he wanted this inscription carved on his tombstone: "I joked about every prominent man of my time but I never met a person I didn't like." No wonder that in his death

he was honored as no other private citizen has been honored in this generation.

At the other extreme stands Oliver Wendell Holmes, the great jurist, at the age of 90 an active and progressive member of the Supreme Court. He willed his fortune to the United States, the country he had loved and served so long and so well.

Unfortunately there are not enough such persons to insure that our common heritage shall be used for the good of all; not enough leaders who place the welfare of the people of this nation above the material interests of the group they may be leading; not enough leaders who have accepted as their own objective those objectives for the realization of which the Constitution of these United States was adopted - a more perfect union in which justice and peace and freedom will prevail. For the realization of these objectives the common people of our country have never hesitated to follow their leaders even unto death. The tomb of the unknown soldier is a tribute to the courage and the devotion to a worthy cause of the common people of this Nation. Surely such a people is entitled to the highest order of leadership!

The United States Government established the Military Academy at West Point and the Naval Academy at Annapolis where young men representing all parts of the United States are trained at government expense to serve as officers in the army and navy - in other words, to protect their country.

The graduates of these two academies have a record for efficiency, loyalty, integrity and devotion to their country that is unparalleled in the history of the United States. They have rendered noteworthy service not only during war but also during peace as administrators and engineers. When given a free hand in large cities they have been remarkably successful in curbing the lawless elements. While at times we have found fault with their expressive language we have never questioned their integrity. Compare their record for integrity and loyalty to those whom they served with that of the leaders in big business and high finance. And in making this comparison, do not forget the results of the investigation made by the United States Senate.

The federal government established the academies to train young men to protect their country from foreign enemies. In like manner the states of the Union have established state universities to train young men and women at the expense of the state to protect our citizens from the enemies within - ignorance, disease, intolerance and poverty.

The Columbus morning paper of December 9, 1933 carried large headlines announcing the death of President Thompson. These headlines might truly have said, "the death of an outstanding university president, or an outstanding educator, or an outstanding preacher," but what they did say was "the death of an outstanding citizen." That is, the death of one who had served the people of this state without reference to

their race, their nationality, their religion, or their social position. Small wonder that the old graduate who saw for the first time the heroic statue of President Thompson which stands in front of the library declared it to be life size.

I covet for the graduates of this University a reputation for integrity, loyalty and devotion to the welfare of the people of our State and our Nation equal to that so long enjoyed by the graduates of our military and naval academies, to the end that our social heritage may be used for the welfare of all and the age-old dream of security come true.